

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Remarks on Signing an Executive Order on Advancing Equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Individuals

June 15, 2022

The President. Thank you. Thank you. My name is Joe Biden, and I'm Jill Biden's husband—[*laughter*]*—and Valerie Biden's brother. And let me start off by saying: Javier, when you're President—[laughter]—and they say, "Joe Biden's out in the waiting room," promise me you won't say, "Joe who?" [Laughter] Okay. All right.*

Thank you for that introduction, Javier, and for your incredible leadership and at such a young age down in Florida. You know, who knows, maybe, as I said, someday you'll be standing here.

And Jill just mentioned, along with Kamala and Doug, it's great to see so many friends—and I mean that—friends and—here in Pride Month, here in the White House.

Speaker Pelosi is here, God love her. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Majority Leader Chuck Schumer from New York. Senator Tammy Baldwin is here too. Congressman Dave Cicilline is here. And the Senator who took my seat in the United States Senate: a guy named Chris Coons. Chris. And other members of the Equality Caucus. There are too many other people to mention by name. I shouldn't probably have started.

But I want to say—[*laughter*]*—I acknowledge Judy and David [Dennis]* Shepard, parents of Matthew Shepard, who are here. We spent some time together at a very difficult time and—at the time. And what you've done and what Matthew did and what all of us—I mean, look what's happened in no small part because of you. I mean that sincerely. And it's good to see you both again. It really is.*

And, by the way, it's almost exactly 7 years since the Supreme Court affirmed marriage equality in America. And, Jim, you called me on the steps of the Supreme Court after that. Where's Jim? I—he's—

Audience member. There he is.

The President. There you go. You called me. I got this phone call when the Court decision came down. And Jim was standing on the—I think you were on the steps of the Supreme Court when you called me. And you said: "Well, we did it. We did it. We did it."

The victory was not just for you and John, but for the whole country. The whole country. And, Jim, it's good to see you, pal. It really is.

You know—and as a point of personal privilege, I want to acknowledge Sarah McBride. Sarah, where are you? Sarah used to work for our deceased son Beau in the attorney general's office in Delaware. She's the first transgender State senator in history. And when I served as Vice President, Sarah was an intern in the White House as well.

Audience member. Yeah!

The President. That's why I kept my office going. I'm a—you know. [*Laughter*] And as I said, she also worked for our beloved son Beau, who was the attorney general. And they passed—anyway, they did a lot. They did a lot together.

* White House correction.

Sarah, you're—wonderful to see you, kiddo.

Look, last year, we hosted this event, and the message is simple: Pride is back at the White House. It really is. From day one—from day one, this has been the most proequality administration in history, led by guys like Pete Buttigieg and so many others. I think we have more LGBTQ+ people than any administration or every administration combined in the—*[applause]*—no, I really mean it. I truly mean it.

As I promised when I got elected, I wanted my administration to look like America—look like America across the board. And we've done that. A record number of out and proud appointees at every single level of our government.

And as I said, you know, Secretary Buttigieg, who needs no introduction, is doing an outstanding job of rebuilding America—and I mean that in the literal sense—and not just in terms of what he's doing at Transportation, but he's helping rebuild pride in America. And, you know—*[applause]*.

And my public spokeswoman, Karine Jean-Pierre, is making history at the podium. We're also joined by the Assistant Secretary of Health and Education—and Human Services, Admiral Rachel Levine, and Under Secretary of Defense Shawn Skelly. Where is—where's the Secretary of—Under Secretary of Defense? There you go. Thank you very much for being here. The first and second transgender Americans to be Senate-confirmed in American history.

Let me say, as Commander in Chief, I'm proud to have ended the un-American ban on transgender Americans serving in our military. And just last week, the Department of Defense announced new policies allowing HIV-positive servicemembers to finally be able to be deployed and commissioned.

And I'm also proud to have signed an Executive order on my first day in office to combat discrimination against LGBTQ—I—excuse me—plus Americans, in housing and health care and education and employment, financial services, and the criminal justice system. First thing I signed.

And you know, no one knows better than the people in this room, we have a lot more work to do. A lot more work to do. I don't have to tell you about the ultra-MAGA agenda attacking families and our freedoms. Three hundred discriminatory bills introduced in States across this country: in Texas, knocking on front doors to harass and investigate parents who are raising transgender children; in Florida, going after Mickey Mouse, for God's sake. *[Laughter]* That's striking close to home.

No, but think about this: All of you in this room know better than anyone that these attacks are real and consequential for real families—for real families. Just look at what happened in Idaho last weekend: 31 White supremacists, stopped just before they reached the Pride celebration, where they apparently planned to unleash violence on people gathering peacefully in a show of their pride. I'm grateful for the swift response of law enforcement. And they responded. They responded.

Violent attacks on the community, including ongoing attacks on transgender women of color, make our Nation less safe. Because the attacks are more than ever last year, and they're on pace again this year. They're disgusting, and they have to stop.

Right now there are young people sitting in their bedroom, doors closed, silent, scrolling through social media, staring at the ceiling, wondering if they'll ever be loved, ever marry, ever have a family and be accepted—by their own family sometimes.

Our son started an organization, before he died, to make sure that people understood what it meant, going all around the country letting people know, trying to train families—the mothers

and fathers, brothers and sisters—of LGBTQ+ people that they have to reach out and embrace and love their blood, to be—allow them to be themselves, or whether they should even be here on Earth, as a lot of folks wonder.

I've found my friends, some of my gay friends—I've asked them: "What was it like as a kid?" I can't imagine what it's like locking yourself in that room and wondering, just staring at the ceiling, just wondering.

And I would note parenthetically that we owe an awful lot to those early, early folks who had the courage to stand up. *[Applause]* No, I really mean it. The message then was not only could you be physically beaten, but you'd lose your job. You couldn't—it just—I just—we owe so many people.

And my message to all the young people: Just be you. You are loved. You are heard. You are understood. You do belong. And I want you to know that, as your President, all of us on this stage have your back. We have your back. We see you for who you are, made in the image of God and deserving dignity, respect, and support.

And today I'm about to sign an Executive order that directs key Federal agencies to protect our communities from those hateful attacks and advance equality for families.

My order—my order will use the full force of the Federal Government to prevent inhumane practices of "conversion therapy." This is the first time the Federal Government is leading a coordinated response against this dangerous, discredited practice.

The Executive order will also support mental health for children by addressing bullying and suicide and making our schools safer. Addressing the Nation's mental health crisis is a key pillar of the unity agenda I announced in the State of the Union Address.

My Executive order will also take on discrimination that children and parents face in foster care. I'm also going to support—*[applause]*—also support older adults so they can age with dignity. And also—*[applause]*—there's a lot there that aren't. And it will do so much to protect and support our fellow Americans.

But Congress has to pass an act as well, and that's the Equality Act, which will enshrine the long-overdue civil rights that protects all Americans—every American.

Let me close with this: We're in a battle for the very soul of this Nation, and that's not hyperbole. We're in a battle for the soul of the Nation. But when I look around this room here, and all of you here today, it's a battle I know we will win. We will win.

And we'll do so on the shoulders of so many people who are no longer with us, but who paved the way for us. People like Gloria Allen, known as "Mama Gloria," who transitioned in the 1950s and who passed away just 2 days ago. People like the legendary advocate, Mr. Vaid [Ms. Urvashi Vaid]*—you know, I mean, this is—you go back and think of the people—who passed away last month from cancer and who once said, "The gay rights movement is an integral part of the American promise of freedom."

To all here today, thank you, thank you, thank you for working to deliver the American promise of freedom.

May God bless you all. And may God protect our troops.

Now I'm going to sign an Executive order. Joining me will be a group of young people who are standing up for equity and a promise of freedom, as well as a few other folks.

* White House correction.

So, folks, thank you—I know you've been standing a long time. *[Laughter]* Just sort of lean against one another. You're so crowded, we all—it will all work out. Okay? Thank you. Thank you.

Audience member. Thank you, Mr. President!

The President. Thank you!

[At this point, the President sat at the signing desk.]

The President. "Advancing Equality for Liberation Gay"—or excuse me, "for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Individuals." That's what I'm about to sign.

[The President signed the Executive order.]

The President. And we usually give a pen to everyone who is part of this, but I only have one with me today. And, Mr. President, it's yours.

[The President handed the signing pen to Miami, FL, resident and LGBTQ activist Javier Gomez.]

Folks—*[applause]*—folks, every time I'd go from my grandpa's house up in Scranton, Pennsylvania, he'd yell, "Joey, keep the faith." And my grandmother—our grandmother would yell, "No, spread the faith." Go spread it. Let's go.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:32 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Kamala D. Harris and her husband Douglas C. Emhoff; Judy and Dennis Shepard, parents of Matthew Shepard, who was murdered in Laramie, WY, in 1998; James Obergefell, plaintiff in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which ruled in favor of marriage equality for same-sex couples; and Chicago, IL, resident and activist Gloria Allen, who died on June 13. He also referred to his sister Valerie Biden Owens. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 16.

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